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U.S. Ambassador (Wk 77-108)

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TCS - 10/18/62

Dear Mr. Chairman:

For the first time since the Korean War, the United States is confronted with a hostile development to which we have an inescapable commitment to respond with military action. Because you are the leader of the Communist bloc and are aware of the consequences incumbent upon such action, I am addressing this note to you and entrusting it to a courier who has my complete confidence.

My Government has recently obtained full and incontrovertible evidence that offensive weapons and bases of a significant nature and number -- specifically, medium range ballistic missiles capable of attacking the United States mainland and many Latin American countries -- are now being assembled in Cuba. The existence of these missiles is in naked violation of repeated assurances from you and other Soviet spokesmen that your military assistance to Cuba was purely defensive in nature. They represent a flagrant defiance of the Rio Pact of 1947, my own unequivocal public statements of this Government's posture toward Cuba, and this nation's traditional obligations with respect to this Hemisphere.

Consequently, the purpose of this note is to inform you that, shortly after the close of your conference with my emissary, I have no choice but to initiate appropriate military action against the island of Cuba. Should you, in the course of today's conference (recognizing the possibility that you may wish to consult with others during this conference) be able to

give to my emissary your unequivocal assurance that this work will halt  
and these missiles, bases and all other offensive weapons removed,  
United States military action can be withheld while continued surveillance  
makes certain that this is done. In this event, I would be glad to meet  
with you upon your arrival in this country and to discuss other problems  
on our agenda, including, if you wish, the NATO bases in Turkey and Italy  
to which you referred in your conversation with Ambassador Kohler but  
which are in no way comparable in the eyes of either history, international  
law or world opinion.

You refused, however, to meet with my predecessor when a United  
States plane affronted the dignity of your nation; and you took military  
action against that plane. I have given assurances that this nation would  
avoid further such incidents; and those assurances have been kept. Your  
assurances with respect to no offensive capabilities in Cuba have not been  
kept; and military action against this threat must therefore be undertaken  
if it is not promptly removed.

I have instructed my emissary to explain this position in detail,  
to inform me promptly in order that military action here may be started  
if no satisfactory response is forthcoming, and to accept as satisfactory  
only your unequivocal assurance that this work will be halted and dismantled.  
Any other response -- whether it involves delay, discussion, counter-  
proposals or threats -- cannot deter this nation from an action so vital to  
our national interest. I am serving similar notice upon Premier Castro.

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Our intention is not to war with the Soviet Union, but to remove this threat to peace. Should those in your Government who fail to grasp the meaning of total war urge upon you any counter-measures or threats which affect other vital interests of this nation, I ask you to remember that the United States possesses both the will and the weapons to take whatever action is needed in the defense of those interests. I trust you shall not underestimate either our determination in this matter, or our desire for peaceful relations -- a desire indicated by our proposals on nuclear tests and disarmament, our agreement on Laos, our general avoidance of provocations, and our recent acquiescence in the action of the Iranian Government in announcing that it would not permit the establishment of foreign missile bases upon its territory.

I shall await the report of my emissary at the close of your meeting; and I earnestly hope he informs me that you have ordered the Cuban Government to halt and rescind this action in the interests of peace and our mutual relations -- and that we may then meet on these shores to pursue the path of peaceful negotiation.